

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2546

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 5797

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG TECH

SUBJECT: QATTARA DEPRESSION PROJECT: VISIT BY CER REPRESENTATIVE

REF: CAIRO 3836

1. LEO VAN DER HARST, SENIOR STAFF ENGINEER, CER GEONUCLEAR CORPORATION CALLED ON AMBASSADOR APRIL 27 IN CONNECTION WITH HIS COMPANY'S INVOLVEMENT IN QATTARA DEPRESSION PROJECT. SPECIFICALLY VAN DER HARST WANTED TO REFUTE STATEMENT MADE BY ABAZA (REFTEL), THAT CER HAD QUESTIONED CREDENTIALS OF JOHNSON AND FIELDS, U.S. MEMBERS OF QATTARA DEPRESSION BOARD OF ADVISORS. HE SAID HIS COMPANY HAD RECEIVED LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT ON THIS SUBJECT. VAN DER HARST SAID HE HAD TALKED TO ABAZA LAST ON FEBRUARY 7; AT THAT TIME NAMES OF JOHNSON AND FIELDS WERE NOT KNOWN AND HE (VAN DER HARST) COULD NOT HAVE MADE STATEMENTS WHICH ABAZA INDICATED WERE MADE. AMBASSADOR SAID VAN DER HARST HAD NOT BEEN MENTIONED BY NAME, ONLY THAT CER REP HAD RAISED QUESTION. VAN DER HARST CLAIMED THAT HE IS ONLY CER EMPLOYEE WITH CONTACT WITH GOE. VAN DER HARST FURTHER STATED THAT HE HAD CONFRONTED ABAZA WITH STATEMENTS APRIL 25 AND THAT ABAZA HAD DENIED HE MENTIONED CER IN THIS CONNECTION.

2. AMBASSADOR TOLD VAN DER HARST THAT HE APPRECIATED THIS INFORMATION AND THAT HE WOULD REPORT MATTER FOR THE

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RECORD. AMBASSADOR OPINED THAT IN MAKING STATEMENTS TO

EMBOFF, ABAZA MAY HAVE WANTED TO PUT CER IN THE MIDDLE FOR HIS OWN PURPOSES; THIS HAD HAPPENED BEFORE IN EGYPT.

3. IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION VAN DER HARST EXPLAINED HIS COMPANY'S INVOLVEMENT IN QATTARA PROJECT. CER IS FULL PARTNER IN FEASIBILITY STUDY GROUP WHICH INCLUDES GERMAN AND U.S. FIRMS. CER CONTRACT FOR 30 MONTH, FIRST-STAGE FEASIBILITY STUDY WORTH ONE MILLION DOLLARS. VAN DER HARST EMPHASIZED THAT THIS IS FIRST STAGE FEASIBILITY STUDY IN WHICH BASIC CONCEPTS OF QATTARA PROJECT ARE BEING EXAMINED. STUDY BASED ON BASSLER REPORT OF 1973. SECOND STAGE STUDY IS SCHEDULED TO FOLLOW, WHICH WILL LAST APPROXIMATELY ANOTHER 30 MONTHS. IF PROJECT IS PROVED FEASIBLE THEN 18-24 MONTH PROJECT DEFINITION PERIOD WILL BE NECESSARY. VAN DER HARST WOULD NOT PREJUDGE OUTCOME THIS FIRST STAGE SAYING STUDY ONLY IN SIXTH MONTH AND THAT NO JUDGMENT RE CRUCIAL CONCERN OF COST/EFFECTIVENESS COULD BE GIVEN.

4. VAN DER HARST EXPRESSED HIS OPINION THAT USE OF PNES FOR QATTARA PROJECT DOES NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT POSSIBLE CONTRAVENTION U.S. NUCLEAR TREATY OBLIGATIONS. VAN DER HARST CITED RECENT TESTIMONY BY DEAN RUSK TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE SAYING THAT DIGGING OF CANAL OR OTHER NATIONAL USES WOULD NOT REPRESENT NPT CONTRAVENTION. HE WAS LESS SPECIFIC AS TO LTB PROVISIONS. ADDITIONALLY VAN DER HARST SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK SUCH TREATY CONCERNS WAS REASON FOR DECLINE IN USC'S PNE PROGRAM. HE SAID THAT PLOWSHARE PROGRAM, WHICH NEVER REALLY ENVISAGED PROJECT OF QATTARA TYPE, WAS PHASED OUT BECAUSE OF THE LACK OF TECHNICAL SUCCESS WHICH WAS OBTAINED IN TWO GAS RESERVOIR STIMULATION PROJECTS IN WESTERN U.S. HE SAID THAT QATTARA PROJECT ENVISAGES DIFFERENT CONCEPTS AND DEPENDING ON OUTCOME OF FEASIBILITY STUDY SHOULD BE LOOKED AT SEPARATELY. IN REGARD TO PASSAGE OF RADIO ACTIVE MATERIAL OVER NATIONAL BOUNDARIES, VAN DER HARST SAID THAT PART OF HIS CURRENT STUDIES IS TO DETERMINE IF THERE WERE NOT SOME WAY TO KEEP CLOUD OVER EGYPTIAN TERRITORY FOR POSTULATED TWO-DAY DANGER PERIOD. HE ENVISAGES TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WIND PATTERN TO DEVELOP "WINDOW" DURING WHICH EXPLOSIONS WILL BE DETONATED. AMBASSADOR ASKED WHAT CONSEQUENCES IN DOMESTIC IMPACT WOULD BE FOR EGYPT.

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VAN DER HARST SAID THIS WOULD BE UP TO EGYPT TO DECIDE.

5. COMMENT. VAN DER HARST STRIDENT IN DENYING ABAZA COMMENTS. WE SUSPECT ABAZA MOTIVES ARE TO HAVE SOMEONE THROUGH WHICH TO EXPRESS HIS OWN RESERVATIONS REGARDING TWO US EXPERTS. RE PROJECT ITSELF, CLEARLY WE ARE AT VARIANCE WITH VAN DER HARST IN INTERPRETATION OF OBLIGATIONS UNDER TREATIES CONCERNING USE OF PNE'S IN THIS CASE. VAN DER

HARST MAINTAINED IN SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION ON THIS
DIFFERENCE WITH EMBOFFS HE HAS TOLD ABAZA THAT SUCH
PROBLEMS WITH AGREEMENTS SHOULD NOT BE OF CONCERN TO GOE
AT THIS POINT, SINCE THERE ARE MONTHS TO GO IN FEASIBILITY
STUDY.
EILTS

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